



Friends of
Port Willunga
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Janelle Arbon
Project Leader
City of Onkaparinga

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Re: Port Willunga North Coast Park Feedback

Dear Janelle

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Council's Concept Plan (the Plan) for the Port Willunga North Coast Park. The Friends of Port Willunga Committee (FOPW Committee) note that the online community feedback methodology for the Port Willunga North Coast Park consultation does not really provide much space for a nuanced response – ie indication of support for some aspects of the Plan but not others – so the Committee have endeavoured to provide that in this submission.

The two most contentious aspects of the Plan for Stage 1 – the section of most concern to FOPW – are. in our view, (i) the closure of all but one of the existing beach access points north of the ramp and (ii) the proposed option of constructing a long bridge across Chinaman's Gully.

Also, while the FOPW Committee acknowledge that the removal of informal car parks from lower Vincent's Terrace could be viewed by some beach goers as contentious, the Committee sees this project as an opportunity to realise a vision that has been put forward by Committee members regularly over our 25 year history, and that is the closure of the northern lower section of Vincent Terrace to traffic altogether, with a view to encouraging the majority of beach goers to use the formal car park and ramp access, away from the sensitive Kaurna and biodiversity sites of the estuary, while acknowledging that informal parking on busy days would also likely continue to occur on the southern section of Vincent Tce, and along Port Road.

We ask that Council take time to consider the points raised below:

Kaurna consultation

The FOPW Committee understands that Council intends to consult with relevant Kaurna groups regarding any impacts of the Plan on culturally sensitive areas around the estuary, and that Kaurna monitors will be employed during any soil disturbance, in accordance with current Aboriginal heritage legislation.

Closure of North Vincent Terrace to traffic

The FOPW Committee see this as an opportunity to create a safer environment for all shared coast park path users and people who walk or cycle to the beach by closing off the northern lower section of Vincent Terrace altogether. We believe there would be considerable community support for creating such a relatively small car-free zone, and we envisage working to secure support for the idea from our formal and informal membership base over the next few months, with a view to endorsement by resolution at our next AGM in January 2021. In summary, the FOPW Committee supports:

- removal of road and car access to the northern section of Vincent Tce below Port Road – ie we advocate closing off Vincent Tce between Star of Greece Road and Port Road
- retention of the pine tree vegetation on both sides of Vincent Terrace as this is viewed as a part of the character of the area
- closure of the road would enable the Coast Park Trail to run down the centre of the road, and therefore remove the need for heavy pruning of the pines on either side of the road
- the Coast Park Trail could then follow the eastern section of the existing gravel road inside the Caravan Park, with the added benefit of providing space for the western dunes to expand eastwards into the site, a key aspiration of the dune reinstatement

The FOPW Committee recognises that closing this road will have an impact on traffic management, car parking and footpaths around Jetty Rd, Port Rd, Vincent Tce and Star of Greece Rd and will use this opportunity to

consult with our formal and informal membership and report back to Council as the Concept Plan is revised and progressed. The Committee at this stage supports:

- retention of current crushed limestone road surfaces on Star of Greece Road, Water Rd and Vincent Tce; ie no new gutters, pavements or street lights
- making Water Rd two way and local access only – while retaining the informal crushed limestone soft edges and surface, ie do not bituminise or build gutters, footpaths etc
- allowing ongoing informal car parking (and if necessary, permit parking) along the upper half of Vincent Tce above Port Road and along Port Road – nb no need to formalise with lines, gutters etc although signage indicating permit holder and disability access may be required (see ‘Disabled and permit holder access’ item below)
- the planting of trees in the vegetated area to the west of the upper half of Vincent Tce to improve canopy and shade in that location

Disabled and permit holder access

The ramp at the end of Port Rd (extension) currently provides additional convenient access to the beach for people with restricted mobility such as the young, the old and those with disabilities. It is also the easiest route for those carrying kayaks and surf boards, and it’s the only access for permitted service vehicles to enter the beach. If the closure of Vincent’s Terrace is to be successful, it will be important to create adequate space around the ramp entrance at the intersection of Port Rd and Vincent Tce for the manoeuvring of large vehicles and for some permit and disability car parking supporting those who might need to access the beach along the ramp.

Concrete path

FOPW Committee requests that the Coast Park path does not exceed 3m width – the narrowest that is acceptable for Coast Park – to slow people down through the sensitive hillside and dune areas, where there are many blind spots.

- Given the necessary steepness of the path north of the creek, FOPW Committee suggest Council may also wish to consider implementing slowing mechanisms for cyclists there (such as “CYCLISTS GO SLOW” signs painted on the path). Texture or paving of steep sections could also be used as a slowing mechanism.
- The Committee would anyway like to be consulted on the details of path options. The colour and texture are of particular interest and we would prefer a lighter softer limestone tint than the orange ochre of the Esplanade Coast Park path as it will blend in with the colour of the sand dunes rather than the ochre of the cliffs.

Former caravan park site

The FOPW are aware of the cultural and environmental sensitivities of the former caravan park and have been for many years supporting the return of this area to a more appropriate sand dune landscape. The Committee sees the building of the Coast Park as an opportunity to support:

- the removal of the compacted gravel and the importation of ample soil/sand to reinstate dune and enable plant growth
- weeding of plantings by ensuring there is an adequate allocation of ongoing resources
- possible realignment of the Coast Park Trail further east than currently proposed, to line up with the proposed alignment further east on Vincent Tce, and to create space for natural dune reinstatement

Stobie poles

FOPW have raised the issue of the stobie poles that dominate the area of the estuary (one in the former caravan park and the other near the top of the cliff on the northern side of the creek). FOPW supports pursuing undergrounding of electricity under the new path and new bridge over Willunga creek. If this is not successful, we support Council negotiating with the relevant landowner ASAP to discuss the Concept Plan, the concerns of others, and seek a resolution.

Helicopter landings

It is of great concern that helicopters are still landing in the former caravan site as it is a publicly accessible open space and in a culturally and environmentally sensitive area. FOPW advocates for the removal of the granting of ANY recreational helicopter landing permits from the area (apart from emergency landings) ASAP.

Retain at least 2 x access points to beach north of the ramp

FOPW strongly supports the retention of at least two beach access points north of the ramp, one south and one north of the creek. This will enable flexibility of beach access dependant on the changing location of Hooded Plover (HP) nesting sites, and reduce/spread pedestrian impacts on the dune system. Indeed all 3 current access points are already working well in that regard, noting that the middle access point was closed last breeding season as that was where the HPs chose to nest. FOPW therefore

- suggests further consideration of how the flexibility of retaining the current 3 x beach access points might be desirable before a decision is made to decommission the southern-most beach access point as on Concept Plan Sheet 1
- does not support perennial decommissioning of the beach access point to the north of creek
- supports retention of at least two beach access points, one south and one north of creek, with a mechanism (such as a lock and chain with explanatory signage) for temporary closure of either one or the other (or a retained third option) during HP breeding season (September 1 to December 31 inclusive)
- requests ongoing consultation on the details of beach access arrangements including the nature of fencing, gateways and signage

Define single access route through dune area to east of Caravan Park?

With current flows of pedestrian movement through the linear park from nearby streets and the eco village, and likely increased foot traffic from the high school and new suburbs, FOPW think it will be difficult to prevent people from continuing to cut through the dune area east of the CP, especially if the CP becomes the only access point to the beach. The lack of a defined path could result in a worsening of the current rabbit warren of tracks through that area, it will leave sensitive areas exposed, and it will contribute to the erosion of the area.

- FOPW suggests that Council consider creation of a single route through the dunes east of the CP and around the culturally and environmentally sensitive areas, rather than attempt to cut off access altogether.
- FOPW however notes that if the northern boardwalk access is maintained, that would take pressure of the desire line through the dunes
- Either way FOPW encourages Council to consider using subtle means to decommission desire paths through the area – through plantings rather than fences and signs

Fencing

FOPW notes there has been much ridicule of the use of Type 4 galvanised steel fencing at lookout points along the esplanade section of Coast Park, given the fact that it forces people to look at the view through gaol-like bars when seated. FOPW therefore suggests

- the use of Type 1 timber post and wire fence (p 42 of Coast Park Plan 4 June 2019 doc) wherever possible
- the use of Type 2 fencing at lookout points, and locations where the path is located close to a steep cliff
- NO support for types 3 or 4, especially at lookout points.

Lighting

- FOPW support no additional lighting in the area as stated in Council's report

Bridge over creek

FOPW recognise that timber construction may NOT provide the lowest visual impact for the bridge crossing the creek – that the use of steel may enable a lighter-weight design solution. We anyway seek to be consulted on the development of the bridge design. FOPW

- support lightest-weight bridge construction, least visual impact, with a 'natural' aesthetic if possible
- seek consultation on any bridge design
- support slowing mechanisms being incorporated into the shared path and bridge design to discourage cyclists from whizzing down the steep slope and onto the bridge

No to bridge over Chinaman's Gully

The proposal to build a long bridge across Chinaman's Gully is viewed as the most contentious aspect of the Concept Plan. FOPW do not support an engineered solution to the challenges of Coast Park crossing the gully, and believe this would be an insensitive solution to such a visually sensitive location. FOPW strongly encourages Council to enter discussions with relevant landowners to establish an easement through the two properties adjacent the gully, or to purchase the land through compulsory acquisition. Landowner concerns regarding their continued safe access through any fencing and/or across the path should of course be addressed.

It is an accident of historic subdivisions that the gully itself is in the hands of private landowners, and the FOPW Committee see this project as a good opportunity to create a safe public pathway through an easement or acquisition of land rather than through construction of a bridge that will impact on views of this iconic section of the Coast Park, from many angles, including the views of the landowners themselves.

- FOPW does not support building a bridge over Chinaman's Gully under any circumstances, due to the undesirable impacts on the visual beauty of the site
- FOPW strongly supports negotiation with adjacent landowners for securing a right-of-way easement, and failing that, supports compulsory acquisition by Council of the land to create a route around the top of the gully

- Failing achievement of right-of-way easement or compulsory acquisition, the FOPW Committee supports ending Stage 1 of the North Coast Park project south of Chinaman's Gully until an acceptable solution is secured.
- FOPW supports rehabilitation of the gully through extensive revegetation and ongoing maintenance of plantings and the need for the allocation of ongoing resources

Selection of vegetation

FOPW notes the very degraded environment all along the path from Pt Willunga to Maslin Unclad Beach

- FOPW Committee supports plans to revegetate the areas around the path but is disappointed to see that the plan only includes low-lying vegetation
- FOPW would like to also see taller vegetation that will shade the path included in appropriate areas, along with taller vegetation around the stobie poles

Public art/interpretive signage

FOPW are cautious about the quality of public art, and potential for community disagreement around the nature of art installations that may be commissioned by Council, as evidenced in other locations. The FOPW Committee would therefore prefer the art budget to go towards:

- removal of the current standard "beware-of-everything one-size-fits-all" signage that has been installed at various beach access points
- replacement of one-size-fits-all warning signage with bespoke minimalist, well designed, low-impact interpretive signage which indicates the relevant hazards and rules while interpreting the natural (eg hooded plover, indigenous plant species) and cultural (eg Kauria and European) heritage and stories of the area
- nb It may be prudent to add "no motorbikes" and "no drones" (symbols) signage to key locations, as both are becoming an increasing nuisance
- removal of "Cans for Cancer" and other bins that currently litter the car park and entire foreshore area, and replacement with well-designed and well-placed bin containers
- provision of strategically-placed benches and picnic tables and other upgrade elements of view-points without the utilisation of "prison-style" Type 4 fencing

Techniques for monitoring and discouraging motorbikes

FOPW suggest that in developing the Coast Park path, and the planting and rehabilitation of the foreshore, dunes, cliffs and gully, that ways and mechanisms of impairing, discouraging and preventing current illegal and relentless (almost daily) motor bike access through the area be developed. This may require regular monitoring of the area by Council staff and/or police, as the problem is escalating and threatening current pedestrians (and their families) on a daily basis. The danger/risks will only increase as more walkers and cyclists start using the Coast Park.

In conclusion FOPW once again thank Council for this opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Concept Plan. We note that there are many complexities and nuances to the Plan and believe our community will take a strong interest in all aspects of its design and implementation.

While the online feedback mechanism is a useful mechanism to "take the temperature" of community responses to the Concept Plan, it does not provide the community with an opportunity to engage with Council staff on particular aspects of the Plan. We therefore believe there will be significant interest from members of the community and from our committee in being provided with an opportunity to engage with the key members of Council's team, in a formal public forum, to thrash out some of the issues raised in this submission and by others.

We therefore look forward to being granted the opportunity to do so in the near future.

Yours sincerely



Stephanie Johnston
Chair
Friends of Port Willunga